Hand safety toolbox talk

Protective equipment · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Builders use their hands for almost everything: carrying blocks, tying steel, stripping shutters, handling sheet metal and glass, and running grinders and breakers. Crushed fingers, deep cuts, nail punctures and nerve damage from vibrating tools are some of the most common site injuries, and a damaged hand can end a tradesman's income. The right glove helps, but it is not the whole answer.

SAY THIS

Think before you grab

Most hand injuries happen when people reach in without looking. Before you pick something up or put your hand somewhere, ask: can this crush, cut, burn or catch my hand? Where are my fingers going to be when this moves or lands? Keep your hands out of the line of fire.

Pinch points and crushing

Fingers get crushed between blocks when stacking, under shutter panels and steel when they are put down, between a load and a wall, and in doors and tailgates of the bakkie. Put loads down on timber spacers so your fingers are not underneath. Use a tag line or push stick instead of your hand to guide loads and material. Never put your hand into a mixer, a compactor or any machine that is running or could start.

Cuts and punctures

Sheet metal, cut steel, broken glass, tile edges and utility knives cause deep cuts. Cut away from your body and keep your other hand behind the blade. Bend over or pull out nails sticking out of old timber and shutters. Do not carry glass or sheeting against your body without cut-resistant gloves and help.

The right glove for the job

There is no single glove for everything. Leather or heavy work gloves for blocks, steel and rough material. Cut-resistant gloves for sheet metal and glass. Waterproof gloves for cement and wet work. Chemical gloves of the type on the safety data sheet for solvents and acids. Welding gauntlets for welding. A cotton glove soaked in cement or solvent is worse than no glove. Gloves must fit: too big and they catch, too small and you take them off.

When not to wear gloves

Do not wear gloves, loose sleeves or rings near rotating parts that can grab them, like a drill press, a bench grinder or a spinning drill chuck. A glove caught in a spinning part pulls the whole hand in. Rings can also catch on edges and tear a finger; take them off at work.

Vibration and getting help

Long hours on breakers, compactors, grinders and hammer drills can damage the nerves and blood vessels in your hands. Tingling, numbness or fingers going white, especially in the cold, are warning signs: tell the supervisor and see a clinic. Swap the tool between people and keep hands warm and dry. For any cut, crush or puncture, go to the first aider straight away and report it, however small.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Which jobs today involve sharp edges, heavy blocks or steel, chemicals, cement or vibrating tools?
- [ ] Are the right types of gloves on site for each of those jobs, in sizes that fit the crew?
- [ ] Are there nails sticking out of stripped shutters or old timber that need to be removed?
- [ ] Are guards fitted on grinders, saws and mixers, and is nobody reaching into running machines?
- [ ] Is the breaker or compactor work shared out so nobody uses it all day?

ASK THE CREW

- ? Show me your hands: what scars do you have, and how did you get them?
- ? Which glove do you use for which job on this site, and which job has no good glove?
- ? Where on this site could your fingers get caught between two things?
- ? Have you had tingling or numb fingers after using the breaker or grinder?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Leather or heavy-duty work gloves for blocks, steel and rough materials · Cut-resistant gloves for sheet metal, glass and tiles · Waterproof gloves for cement and wet work · Chemical-resistant gloves as named on the safety data sheet · Welding gauntlets for welding and cutting

THE LAW

Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, section 8: General duties of employers to their employees; General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 2: Personal safety equipment and facilities; Physical Agents Regulations, 2024, regulation 13: Vibration; Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, section 14: General duties of employees at work. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/hand-safety/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Hand safety and gloves

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.